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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANJUL 000101

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH CHIEF OF DEFENSE STAFF

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Barry L. Wells for reasons 1.4  
(a) (d)

1.(U) SUMMARY: Ambassador met with Gambian Chief of Defense Staff Major General Lang Tombong Tamba on a variety of issues including Gambian contributions to UN Peacekeeping operations, IMET, and the recent visit of Guinea-Bissau CDS Captain (Navy) Jose Zamora Induta.

2.(SBU) Ambassador met with Gambian Chief of Defense Staff Tamba and passed along concerns about the English language facility of recent IMET participants, as two of them were unable to pass the language test upon arrival. If this problem continues, this could lead to an in country test requirement which could impact Gambian participation. Tamba promised that he would assure that future participants were sufficiently fluent in English.

3.(C) Tamba said that the visit of Guinea-Bissau Chief of Defense Staff Jose Zamora Induta resulted in the signing of an MOU between the countries that focused on communications and technical assistance cooperation. The delegation paid courtesy call on President Jammeh at State House. Ambassador asked CDS if Induta was acting in this capacity since it was not clear that his appointment was official. Tamba said Induta is officially the CDS, then lamented that the system in GB is for the military leadership to select the CDS, not the President as is done in most other countries, including The Gambia. He pointed to this practice as leading to continuing problems in GB as the CDS has no allegiance to the President but is dependent on the loyalty of the military. He felt this was at the core of the recent assassinations and commented that the last 4 CDS' in GB were assassinated as well.

4.(C) Tamba said they did not discuss the situation of former GB Chief of Navy Staff, N'Tchuto and that President Jammeh had committed to keep him in The Gambia unless directed by ECOWAS to release him to another member country. Tamba also denied that former GB president Kumba Yalla was in The Gambia as was rumored. He indicated that President Jammeh had directed him to promote a joint MOU with Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea Conakry and The Gambia for expanded military cooperation. Tamba added that he was invited to attend Senegal's' independence April 4 and would be going to Dakar for the celebrations.

5.(SBU) Tamba indicated that The Gambia Armed Forces would induct approximately 1300 new recruits next week, the largest intake to date. This he said was in continuing preparation to field a full battalion for peacekeeping operations under the UN umbrella. Ambassador asked if The Gambia has been in touch with the UN recently regarding the continuing need for the forces and he said they had not. He also indicated that messages to the UN were not always handled well by their delegation and The Gambia was considering adding a Defense Attach' to their UN delegation. Ambassador suggested The Gambia should consult with the UNPK as to the continuing need for these forces.

6.(C)COMMENT: Tamba's take on the CDS situation in Guinea-Bissau is interesting as is the visit to The Gambia to sign an MOU. With the GB situation still in a state of flux,

this may be a move by Induta to gain credibility and solidify support for the legitimacy of his role as CDS. Tamba showed little respect for the GB military and commented on their deep involvement in corruption including drug trafficking. This move is also indication of Jammeh's efforts to raise his profile in the region. We ren't quite certain whether to take Tamba at his word that Induta did not meet N'Chuto, as sources elsewhere in the military told POL/ECON LES that such a meeting would take place and that the primary purpose of the visit was to promote a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Guinea-Bissau.

WELLS